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Abstract

Goes beyond Carpenter’s well-known reference to Cynewulf’s Christ as Tolkien’s “primary inspiration” for Eärendel. Seeks out the philological roots of various aspects of Eärendel (star, messenger, mariner, eagle, herald).

Additional Keywords

Cynewulf. Christ; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Eärendel—Sources

OVER MIDDLE-EARTH SENT UNTO MEN On the Philological Origins of Tolkien's Earendel Myth

Carl F. Hostetter

One of the most striking and memorable of Tolkien's myths is that of *Eärendil*.¹ Humphrey Carpenter (*Biography*, p. 64) long ago pointed out that Tolkien's primary inspiration for the figure of Eärendil was his 1913 discovery of lines 104-5 of Cynewulf's *Crist*, an Anglo-Saxon (AS) poem found only in the *Exeter Book*:

<i>Eäla Earendel,</i>	<i>engla beorhtast,</i>
<i>ofer middangeard</i>	<i>monnum sendad</i>
Hail Earendel,	brightest of angels,
over middle-earth	sent unto men

Still, Tolkien critics have made little endeavor to explore beyond the now comfortable familiarity of these two lines, either within the *Crist*² or further into the philological tangle in which the "historical" Earendel is enmeshed.³ While these two lines show the "precise kindling point of imagination" for Tolkien's Eärendil,⁴ careful study of the larger body of philological lore surrounding the "historical" Earendel reveals several interesting and illuminating parallels with Tolkien's Eärendil myth which demonstrate that its broader origins are philological, the result of Tolkien's own exploration of Earendel beyond this "kindling point".

As the following is an examination of the "sources" for Tolkien's Eärendil, I feel that I should offer some brief justification for disregarding Tolkien's own "clear warnings as to the dangers" (Shippey, p. ix) of engaging in such studies. To do so I need only note that Tolkien himself allowed that "only in one case *Eärendil* will reference to its source cast any light on the legends or their 'meaning' — and even in this case the light is little." (*Letters*, p. 387) While through this study I take issue with the last part of this statement, I have taken the first to heart as leave (if unenthusiastic) to delve into the philological lore of the "historical" Earendel, and to ponder its role in the origins and development of Tolkien's Eärendil.

(Note: The two most important, though by no means the only, texts for an exploration of Tolkien's Eärendil, the *Crist* and the *Blickling Homilies*, are also among the least accessible. Thus, I have given a full citation and translation of the relevant portions of these texts as an appendix.)

The only certain knowledge we have regarding the history and meaning of the word *Earendel* is that nothing is known with certainty about it. Of the numerous etymologies offered for it and its plethora of related forms — e.g. Lombardic (Lomb.) *Auruiuandulus* (Gollancz, p. 34);

Old Norse (ON) *Örvandil* (Grimm, p. 375), *Aurvandil* (Sturluson, p. 105); AS *earendil*, *oerendil* (Sweet, p. 72, line 545), *earendel* (*ibid.*, p. 73, line 1161), *eorendel* (Morris, p. 163, line 30); Old High German (OHG) *Orendil*, *Orentil* (Grimm, p. 374-5); Old Danish (OD) *Horvendillus* (in a Latinized form due to Saxo; Müller, p. 135) — those of Jacob Grimm and Israel Gollancz are most representative of the thoughts contemporary to Tolkien's own discovery and exploration. Grimm declares (p. 375):

I am only in doubt as to the right spelling and interpretation of the word; an OHG. *örendil* implies AS. *earendel*, and the two would demand ON. *auurvandil*, *eyrvandil*; but if we start with ON. *örvandil*, then AS. *earendel*, OHG. *erentil* would seem preferable. The latter part of the compound certainly contains *entil* = *wentil*.⁵ The first part should be either *öra*, *eare* (auris [Lat. = 'ear']), or else ON. *ör*, gen. *örvar* (sagitta [Lat. = 'arrow'])⁶

Gollancz (p. 34) proposes that it is related to Sanskrit *ursā* 'the morning-red', Latin *aurora* and Greek *ῥῶς* = 'dawn', citing the similarity between "the old Germanic spring-goddess 'Auströ', reconstructed from Bede's *Eostre* = West Saxon *Eastre*, whence our own Easter, asserting thus that "'Earendel' and 'Easter' have evidently the same root." Gollancz mentions too the then-current theory that *ear* is to be equated with "the root signifying 'to burn' in Greek *εὔω*, Latin *uro*, *Ves-uvius*, etc." Gollancz also discusses a theory that the earliest recorded form of the name, Lomb. *Auruiuandulus*, is connected with ON *aurr* 'moisture', and thus with AS *ear* 'sea'; *Earendel* should then be interpreted as "the wanderer on the sea, the seafarer".⁷ But, Gollancz protests, "It is certainly difficult from this standpoint to explain the Anglo-Saxon use of *earendel*", i.e. as the *sōðfaesta suman leoma* (*Crist*, line 106).

Just such an explanation proved *not* to be difficult, however, for Tolkien. Through careful study of the major manuscript sources for Earendel and of the various legends associated with him, and through a deep consideration of the philological possibilities represented in the word *Earendel* (both those presented above as well as others peculiar to Tolkien), and by means of characteristic philological synthesis, Tolkien would in fact "deduce" five aspects of Earendel — the Star, the Messenger, the Eagle, the Mariner, and the Herald, — and incorporate these aspects into his own Eärendil myth.

I. Earendel as Star

Tolkien's first and most vivid image of Eärendil, derived even from the "kindling point" of line 104 of the *Crist*, was that of a star, in particular the planet Venus, the

Morning- (or Evening-) star.⁹ Indeed, Tolkien's earliest treatment of Earendel, the 1914 poem originally titled 'The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star' (*BoLT II*, pp. 267-9) is a dramatic (and somewhat morose) account of Earendel's celestial course. As with many of Tolkien's images and themes, the nature and significance of Eärendil as Morning-star and of the source of his brilliant light (at first, merely his ship; later, the Silmaril upon his brow) would expand and deepen. Nevertheless, the single clear image, derived from the *Crist*, of Earendel as a brilliant light poised above the middle-earth would remain, a powerful catalyst for the formation of Tolkien's mythology.

There is indeed a primary myth explicitly equating Earendel with a star. Snorri Sturluson, in the so-called *Prose Edda*, relates a tale in which Thor must carry the giant Aurvandil in a basket on his back across the rivers Élivágar. One of Aurvandil's toes, sticking out of the basket, becomes frozen. Thor breaks the toe off and throws it into the sky, whence the star called *Aurvandils-tá*, 'Aurvandil's toe'. It is not clear exactly what celestial object is indicated here; it has been variously postulated to be Sirius, the brightest of the fixed stars;¹⁰ or Rigel, a prominent blue-white star in the constellation of Orion;¹¹ or, as Tolkien interpreted it, Venus.

There are persuasive philological reasons for Tolkien to have made this interpretation. It is clear from the light-imagery of the *Crist* that Cynewulf intended Earendel as a bright heavenly object. This is supported by the Epinal-Erfurt glosses (Sweet, pp. 7273) of Earendel as *tubar* = Latin 'a beaming light, radiance, esp. of the morning star and other heavenly bodies' (Simpson), and the equation there and in the *Crist* and the *Blickling Homilies* of Earendel with AS *lēoma* = 'leam' (OED: "Light, flame; a flash, ray, or gleam of light"). All of this in turn naturally recalls Latin *lucifer*, Greek *φωσφορος* = 'light-bearing, light-bringing', used substantively of Venus as the Morning-star.¹²

II. Earendel as Messenger

Another major aspect of Tolkien's Eärendil is that of the Messenger. That Tolkien thought of Earendel as a messenger can perhaps be glimpsed even in 'The Voyage of Earendel the Evening Star': "And he heard the mirth of the folk of earth/ And the falling of their tears" (lines 37-38); but the greatest expression of this concept would come with the development of Tolkien's mythology from *The Book of Lost Tales* to *The Silmarillion*, where Eärendil seeks "to bring ere he died the message of Elves and Men to the Valar in the West, that should move their hearts to pity for the sorrows of Middle-earth."¹³

While a clear Messenger aspect of Earendel can be derived from the *Blickling Homilies*, where the *earendel* is explicitly John the Baptist, this aspect is not so immediately clear in the Earendel of the *Crist*, as Cook's own interpretive survey (pp. 89-91) shows. There are, however, important philological markers contained in both the *Crist* and the *Blickling Homilies* which led Tolkien to make this association.

It is well known that Tolkien was acutely aware of the original and precise meanings of words, an awareness which he exercised scrupulously and to great effect in his own writings (one need only consult Verlyn Flieger's *Splintered Light* or Tom Shippey's *Road to Middle-earth* to obtain an appreciation for this). Given this, the close association of Earendel with *engel* = 'messenger, angel' in both the *Crist* (line 104, in the genitive form *engla*) and the *Blickling Homilies* (line 21, in the dative form *englum*, and line 35) must have struck Tolkien as significant. *Engel* is of course the ancestor of our own word 'angel'; its form in Gothic is *aggilus* 'angel, messenger' (Wright, p. 303), from Greek *ἄγγελος* (or perhaps from Latin *angelus*; *ibid.*, p. 303), which originally had only its primary meaning 'messenger', but which then also acquired its religious significance as a translation for the Hebrew *mal'ak-yehōwāh* 'messenger of Jehovah' (OED).¹⁴ This serves of course to emphasize the role of Earendel as Messenger in these poems (a nuance lost to most moderns in the use of the word 'angel'), and Tolkien's perception of Earendel as Messenger.

But Tolkien would also have known that Gothic had another word for 'messenger', *airus*, of obscure origins (Lehmann, p. 19), cognate with AS's own alternate form for 'messenger', *ār*, and widely held (OED) to be etymologically related to AS *ǣrende* (itself of obscure origins); this is of course our word 'errand', but retaining also its original, now obsolete, sense of "A message, a verbal communication to be repeated to a third party" or "In religious language: A petition or prayer presented through another (the Virgin Mary)" (OED); that is, *ǣrende* is both the task of a messenger and the message itself. Now, while it would be imprudent of me to even hint that *ǣrendel* and *ǣrende* might be etymologically related, I will observe that they are so phonologically similar (/ærendel/ vs. /ærendə/) that an AS speaker might well have surmised a relationship between the two. That is, to an Anglo-Saxon, the very word *ǣrendel* may have suggested both *message* and *messenger*. It is not unlikely that Tolkien, who delighted in such juxtapositions of sound and meaning, would have made a similar observation. Certainly the close correspondence of the role of Tolkien's Eärendil with the original meaning (and particularly with the religious meaning) of 'errand' suggests that he did. Whether through *engel* or *ǣrende* (though most likely through both), Tolkien came to see Earendel as Messenger.

III. Earendel as Eagle

Tolkien's Eärendil is, in *The Book of Lost Tales*, somewhat (exactly) associated with eagles. Indeed, Tolkien's earliest (extant) explanation of the name *Eärendel* (*BoLT II*, p. 267) notes that it "has some kinship to the Elfin *ea* and *earen* 'eagle' and 'eyrie' (whenceforth cometh to mind the passage of Crithorn [= 'Cleft of the Eagle', through which the survivors of the fall of Gondolin escaped; see *BoLT II*, p. 193] and the use of the sign of the Eagle by Idril [Eärendil's mother; *ibid.*])", and that, echoing the situation of the "historical" Earendel, "there are many interpreta-

tions both among Elves and Men" of the name *Eärendel* (*BoLT* II, p. 165), with a suggestion that it is a word of "some secret tongue" spoken by the people of Gondolin "that has perished with them from the dwellings of the Earth" (*ibid.*).¹⁵ In the *Qenya* Lexicon, *ea* and *earen*, here both meaning 'eagle', are found together with *Eärendel* (*BoLT* I, p. 251, entry *Eärendel*). Names based on the *Qenya ea*, *earen* 'eagle' are found also in *BoLT* II: e.g. *Eäramë* 'Eaglepinion', a name of *Eärendel*'s ship. And *Eärendel*, as Messenger, shares the role with the Eagles of Manwë who, like *Ööin*'s ravens Hugin and Munin, already in *The Book of Lost Tales* serve as messengers and news-gatherers.

But surely the inspiration for this relationship, and for Tolkien's Elvish etymology, resides firmly with the AS *earn* = 'eagle', a fact which Tolkien himself let slip in a gloss, struck out, of *Eäramë* as *Earnhama*, AS 'Eagle-coat, Eagle-dress' (*BoLT* II, p. 276, note 9). As with *Eärendel* above, while (I think) Tolkien would not offer *earn* 'eagle' as in fact etymologically related to *Eärendel*, it is a phonological-plausible connection for an Anglo-Saxon to have made.

IV. Earendel as Mariner

Though Tolkien initially explains the name *Eärendel* as containing the element *ea* 'eagle', by the time *The Etymologies* (LR, pp. 341-400) were written,¹⁶ Tolkien's etymology for *Eärendel* had changed: rather than being explained as containing the *Qenya* word *ea* 'eagle', it was now formed from *Qenya ear* 'sea' (*ibid.*, p. 349, bases AYAR-, AIR-).¹⁷ This process would eventually culminate in *Qenya Eärendil* 'Sea-lover', the Mariner.¹⁸ But even before this change, in fact from the earliest poems, Tolkien's *Eärendel* is depicted as a Mariner. This aspect of Tolkien's *Eärendil*, together with that of the Star, is the most pervasive, and can be traced from the earliest poem to Tolkien's final writings on this myth.

A full discussion of the significance of the Sea and Mariners to Tolkien lies beyond the scope of this paper. It may be briefly noted that everywhere in Tolkien's fictional writing, and often in his professional writing, the sea serves as a metaphor of longing for, and separation from, a lost, unfallen state (e.g. in the essay *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*: "But from the top of that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea." [MatC, p. 8]).

While the association of *Eärendil* with the sea was for Tolkien a deeply personal one, there are, to be sure, good philological precedents for this association. There are several legends about Earendel in which the sea figures. In Saxo Grammaticus' *Historia Danica* we find the piratical mariner *Horvendillus*.¹⁹ In this connection it is interesting to note that a certain *Feng* appears as *Horvendil*'s jealous brother, while in a fragment of an alliterative *Lay of Eärendel*, *Fengel* [itself an AS noun meaning 'lord, prince, king' (Hall)] is variously *Tuor*'s father [thus Earendel's grandfather], or *Tuor* himself (*LoB*, pp. 141-2, 145, 148).²⁰ And Grimm tells of "a somewhat rude poem" in the German *Heldenbuch*:

about a king *Orendel* or *Erentel*, whom the appendix to the *Heldenbuch* pronounces the first of all heroes that were ever born. He suffers shipwreck on a voyage, takes shelter with a master fisherman *Eisen*, earns the seamless coat of his master, and afterwards wins *frau Breide*, the fairest of women: *King Eigel* of Trier was his father's name.²¹

These legends of maritime adventure and misadventure are perhaps dimly reflected, if at all, in the accounts of *Eärendel*'s voyages about the Great Sea, particularly those in *The Tale of Eärendel* in *BoLT* II, and especially in the sojourn of *Eärendel* with the *Oarni*,²² "the spirits of the foam and the surf of the ocean" (*BoLT* I, p. 66). To be sure, as Ruth S. Noel notes (p. 117), *Breide* ('Bright') "corresponds well with *Elwing*, the bright bearer of the *Silmaril*." But these similarities are broad at best, and are certainly to be found widely in tales of nautical mishap.

However, as with the Eagle aspect of Earendel, a clear source of Tolkien's association of Earendel with the sea lies in etymology. For even as Tolkien turned away from an aquline explanation of *Eärendel*, with its related AS word *earn*, he turned towards yet another AS form, the word *ear* 'wave, sea, ocean' (Hall). As discussed above, this AS form is related to ON *aurr* 'moisture', which perhaps accounts for the ON form *Aurvandill*. Indeed, this association, much more so than with AS *earn* 'eagle', seems to be on firm etymological footing, in addition to being phonologically evocative.

V. Earendel as Herald

Tolkien's interpretation of Earendel as a herald is certainly consonant with the equation of Earendel with Venus as the Morning-star, which physically heralds the rising of the sun. Moreover, this figurative use of Earendel as a herald of the sun is paralleled by a literal use in both the *Crist* and the *Blicking Homilies*, where Earendel is a herald of the "True Sun," Christ.²³

Lines 104-19 of the *Crist* occur in a section of the poem known as the *Advent Lyrics*, which comprise a series of meditations on the coming of Christ. Cook asserts (p. 88) that these lines are "based upon the Antiphon of the Magnificat for December 21: O ORIENS, SPLENDOR LUCIS AETERNAE, ET SOL JUSTITIAE: VENI, ET ILLUMINA SEDENTES IN TENEBRIS ET UMBRA MORTIS" ('O Rising Sun, splendor of the Light Eternal, and Sun of Justice: come, and illumine those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death'). Just as does this antiphon, the *Crist* (lines 109-19) too depicts the righteous pre-Christians as sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, awaiting the illumination of not the sun, but of Christ, the Bright Sun, just as bright Earendel heralds the greater brilliance of the sun.²⁴

These images and themes are repeated in the *Blicking Homilies*, where however the *niwa eorendel* 'new dawn' (line 31) is explicitly Christ's herald, John the Baptist. John is "the messenger of God's Son, the standard-bearer of the Supreme King, and the forgiveness of sins and the setting right of heathen nations" (lines 22-23), the messenger who

goes before God, who is the "True Sun" of which Christ is "the gleam" (line 32).

The image in the *Crist* of an expectant people biding illuminating salvation in darkness is reflected in the plight of those peoples who, after the ruin of Doriath and the fall of Gondolin, gather at the mouths of Sirion under Eärendil's lordship.²⁰ The very words of the *Crist* are echoed in Fionwë's greeting of Eärendel (*SoMe*, p. 154):

'Hail Eärendel, radiant star, messenger most fair! Hail thou bearer of light before the Sun and Moon, the looked-for that comest unawares, the longed-for that comest beyond hope! Hail thou splendour of the children of the world, thou slayer of the dark! Star of the sunset hail! Hail herald of the morn!'

And having achieved their salvation, Eärendil, as does Eärendil, heralds that salvation to those dwelling in Middle-earth (*S*, p. 250):

Now when first Vingilot was set to sail in the seas of heaven, it rose unlooked for, glittering and bright; and the people of Middle-earth beheld it from afar and wondered, and they took it for a sign, and called it Gil-Estel, the Star of High Hope.

* * *

Through his exploration of the philological lore surrounding the "historical" Eärendel, Tolkien "deduced" the five major aspects of Eärendel explored here — the Star, the Messenger, the Eagle, the Mariner, and the Herald — and incorporated them into his own figure of Eärendil. In doing so, Tolkien synthesized a powerful myth for his Middle-earth. Indeed, one could argue that much of Tolkien's mythology ultimately springs from this philological source; for while Tolkien wrote of Eärendel that he "adopted him into my mythology" (*Letters*, p. 387), Tolkien's earliest mythological writings (*BoLT II*, pp. 26776) show that it would perhaps be more accurate to say that his mythology was shaped around, and grew from, his vision of Eärendel: "And thus did all the fates of the fairies weave then to one strand, and that strand is the great tale of Eärendel" (*BoLT II*, p. 252). Through philological inquiry and synthesis, Tolkien labored to recover something of the form and significance of "the great tale" that was perhaps once told of Eärendel, now lost together with so much else of the literature of the North. For having surveyed the jumbled and disparate fragments of legend which have by chance reached us, Tolkien must have longed to hear this "great tale" told complete. It is this longing in the knowledge of lost tales that causes Tolkien's world-weary minstrel to renounce his song of Eärendel:

The song I can sing is but shreds one remembers
Of golden imaginings fashioned in sleep,
A whispered tale told by the withering embers
Of old things far off that but few hearts keep.
— from *The Lay of Eärendel* (*BoLT II*, p. 271)

* * *

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Notes

¹ Throughout this paper, I use *Eärendel* to denote the "historical" figure, and variously *Eärendil* or *Eärendil* to discuss Tolkien's Sub-created figure, in accordance with Tolkien's own spellings of the name at the period under question; where no such distinction is necessary, I use *Eärendil*, Tolkien's final form of the name.

² With the notable exceptions of Randel Helms (pp. 3740) and Tom Shippey (pp. 183-4).

³ Again, excepting Shippey, and also Ruth S. Noel (pp. 11718) who has at least read Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*.

⁴ Shippey, p. 37. Tolkien as much as states this in a letter from 1967 (*Letters*, p. 385):

The most important name in this connexion is *Eärendil*. This name is in fact (as is obvious) derived from Anglo[Saxon] *Eärendel*. When first studying AS professionally (1913) ... I was struck by the great beauty of this word (or name), entirely coherent with the normal style of AS, but euphonic to a peculiar degree in that pleasing but not 'detectable' language. ... Before 1914 I wrote a 'poem' upon Eärendel who launched his ship like a bright spark from the heavens of the Sun. I adopted him into my mythology in which he became a prime figure as a mariner, and eventually as a herald star, and a sign of hope to men. *Aiya Eärendil Elenion Ancalima* (II 329) 'hail Eärendil brightest of Stars' is derived at long remove from *Eala Eärendel engla beorhtast*.

⁵ Grimm here inserts a not-uncharacteristically obtuse footnote:

Whence did Matthesius (in Frisch 2, 439) get his "Das ist die heathens' Wendel and head bagpipe"? Can the word refer to the metamorphoses of the flute-playing demogad? In trials of Witches, Wendel is a name for the devil, Moses an. 2, 124.

⁶ A seemingly ridiculous etymology, until it is remarked that *AS ear* can refer not only to the organ of hearing, but also as in Modern English to "the part of a cereal plant which contains its flowers or seeds" (*OED*, *Ear*, s.v.), as in "an ear of corn" (Bosworth, p. 231). It is possible then that in Eärendel we have King Sheaf, the Corn God, who interestingly also has strong nautical associations (e.g. "Id est filius Noe se geboren on þære earce Noes" [he is the son of Noah; he was born on Noah's ark], according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* for A.D. 855 [Owen, p. 33]; I can hardly improve upon the discussion of the Sheaf found in LR, pp. 85-7, 89-97). Or perhaps a northern Persephone, whose departure to and return from the Underworld heralds the change of seasons, just as Venus, an inner planet, through the months cyclically appears at morning, is eclipsed by the sun, and then reappears in the evening?

⁷ This is the view favored by de Santillana and von Dechend (p. 357), who further note a theory by Karl Simrock (in *Die Quellen des Shakespeare in Novellen, Märchen und Sagen*, Bonn, 1870, pp. 192) which posits an archer-Eärendel as the source of the legend of William Tell, noting that for the German form represented in the *Heldenbuch* by *Erendelle*, *Eren* could eventually have been weakened and so interpreted as a separate word *Her*, i.e. the honorific 'lord, master', thus, 'Lord Tell'.

⁸ Cleasby and Vigfusson offer no etymology for *aurendil* in their *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, but its proximity to the prominent entry *AURR* "wet clay or loam" is suggestive. De Vries' *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* is vastly more helpful, though necessarily only tentative, on this point, noting a possible relationship under *aurr 2* with various words connoting "water" and under *austr 2* with "east", as well as under *sondr* "branch, stick [or wand]".

⁹ So called because, as an inner planet, it never achieves an apparent separation from the sun of more than about 46°, so that its appearance in the sky either closely precedes sunrise, or closely follows sunset. When visible, Venus is a brilliant and prominent object, indeed the third brightest of all heavenly objects as seen from the earth.

¹⁰ For a full discussion of the possible relationship of Auvrandil with Sirius, see de Santillana and von Dechend, pp. 357-9. It is also interesting to note here a further stellar association: that *AS ear* 'ear of corn' is a translation of Latin *spica* (Bosworth, p. 231), which is a name for

the brilliant, first magnitude star in the constellation Virgo; see note 6 above.

¹¹ The constellation of Orion is in the figure of a man, on which Rigel could indeed be viewed as marking a foot. It has been suggested that Earendel in fact represents the entire constellation of Orion: e.g. Gollancz (in a note quoted by Cook, pp. 909) offers that "the spelling in the Erfurt Gloss 'oerendil' is noteworthy. It seems probable that 'Earendel' = 'Orion,' the constellation brightest at winter-time". When the possible connections with ON *ār* = 'arrow', ON *aurr* (with various water connotations), and AS *ān* 'sea', alluded to above, are compared with the Greco-Roman myth of Orion — who according to some accounts is beloved of Aurora, the Dawn-goddess, and is slain by Apollo, the Sun-god, with an arrow while wading the ocean — this interpretation seems all the more intriguing.

¹² The OED explains the equation of Lucifer with Satan as first performed by overzealous Christian interpreters of Isaiah xiv, 12 in the Vulgate, and declares it "now rare in serious use".

¹³ A task which, remarkably, Earendel fails to complete in the earlier versions of his tale; indeed, in all renditions of the tale before the 1930 *Quenta* (given in *SoMe*; see especially p. 154), Earendel arrives in Valinor too late; he finds the streets of Kôr deserted, not because the inhabitants are attending a festival, as in *The Silmarillion*, but because Finwë's army is already departed. Thus while the desired salvation is achieved, it is not through the embassy of Earendel.

¹⁴ There is no Indo-European root corresponding to *ἀγγελος*. Liddel & Scott inform us (p. 4) that *ἀγγελος* is itself a borrowing, from Persian, as is the related Greek word *ἄγγελος* 'mounted courier'.

¹⁵ No explanation is offered for the element *(n)del*, which however would later become *(n)dil*, signifying 'friend' or 'devotion'.

¹⁶ Or rather, by the time Tolkien completed his reworking of the 'A' entries; see LR, pp. 343-44.

¹⁷ Here are also given the Noldorin cognates *oer*, *oer*; these are particularly interesting in light of the form *oerendil* in the Erfurt glosses (Sweet, p. 72, line 545), and indeed seem deliberate. See note 11 above.

¹⁸ After this reinterpretation, Earendel's ship *Eärendil* 'Eaglepinion' became his father Tuor's ship *Eärendil* 'Sea-wing' (S, p. 245).

¹⁹ Where he is, ironically enough, Hamlet's father; ironic, that is, in light of Tolkien's avowed distaste for the character of Hamlet as drawn by Shakespeare: cf. Tolkien's remark on Hamlet, as represented by Humphrey Carpenter (*Linkings*, p. 136): "... the son being a chip of the old blockhead, and quite as conceited as papa".

²⁰ In this same fragment appear the Hælsingas, a tribe which, as Christopher Tolkien notes, "is supposed to have left its name in Helsingör (Elsinore)", which of course is the site of Hamlet's castle.

²¹ Grimm, p. 374. For a discussion of the Christian significance of the "seamless coat" see Shippey, p. 184.

²² Compare *Oarni* with Noldorian *oer*, *oer*, as the AS form *oerendil*; see note 17 above.

²³ Tolkien noted (*Letters*, p. 285, footnote) that Earendel is "[o]ften supposed to refer to Christ (or Mary), but comparison with [Blickling] Hom[ilies] suggests that it refers to the Baptist. The lines refer to a *herald*, and divine messenger, clearly not the *sofæsta sunnan leoma* [Crist, line 106] = Christ." This careful distinction between Christ and John, between the Herald and the herald, should be observed by any who would argue that Earendil is to be seen as a Christ-figure (as does Helms, pp. 37-40).

²⁴ In this regard it is interesting to consider Tolkien's early and mysterious allusions to the rekindling of a "Magic-Sun" after the Elves have been delivered by the Faring Forth from their desolate wanderings in the Great Lands (and distinct from the revivification of the Two Trees [BoLT II, p. 281]; and especially p. 179, where "the Gods knew not what [Yavanna] meant, speaking of the Magic-Sun, nor did for a long while after"); note especially that "Earendel" returns from the firmament ever and anon with Voronwë to Kôr to see if the Magic-Sun has been lit and the fairies have come back... (BoLT II, p. 264). See the indices to BoLT I & II for further references.

²⁵ This is particularly clear in Tûrin's grim prophecy: "A pitiable remnant will fly south and west, to cower on the shores of the Sea, caught between Morgoth [the Dark Enemy] and Ossë [the Wrathful Sea]." (UT, p. 156). Shippey (p. 184) notes that "This [image] ... is the 'lyric

core', the flashpoint of the imagination. It is the vision of people looking up from the depths, *de profundis*, from the 'dark shadow of death' and of despair, and seeing a new light..."

Appendix

I give here, for ease of reference, the two sources for the Eärendil myth which Tolkien mentions specifically (*Letters* 385). In doing so, I have employed editions which would have been current to Tolkien's period of inspiration and early development of the Eärendil myth. However, it must be noted that Tolkien himself makes no explicit mention of particular editions,[†] and that, as Shippey points out (p. x), he often knew these texts "a good deal better than most of their editors."

I. The *Crist* of Cynewulf:

The most important passage, lines 10419, is given from Cook's edition of 1900 (p. 5)†; the translation is my own:

- Eala Earendel, engla beorhtast,
ofer middangeard monnum sendend
ond sofæsta sunnan leoma,
torht ofer tunglas, — þu ða gehwane
of sylfum þe symle inlhtes.
Swā þu, God of Gode gæaro accenned,
110 Sunu sōþan Fæder, swegles in wuldre
būtan agninne æfre wære,
swā þe cūd for þearfum þin āgen geweorc
bided þurh byldo, þæt þu þa beorhtan
sunnan onsende, ond þe sylf cyme,
115 þæt þu inleohste þa þe longe ær
þrosme beþeahste, ond in þeostrum, hēr
sæton sinneahstes synnum bifealdne,
deorc dæpas sceadu dreoġan sceodan.

Hail Earendel, brightest of angels,
over middle-earth sent unto men,
and soothfast gleam of the sun,
radiant above the stars, thou every season
of thyself ever enlighten.

As Thou, God from God of yore begotten,
Son of the true Father, in the glory of heaven
without beginning ever were,
so Thee now of need Thine own handiwork
bides through boldness, that Thou the bright
sun to us might send forth, and Thyself come,
that Thou might enlighten those who since long before
by mists covered, and in darkness, here
have sat in continual night by sins enfolded,
dark death's shadow must endure.

[†] However, the form of Tolkien's citation of *The Blickling Homilies* (*Letters*, p. 387, footnote) shows that he knew Morris' edition, and his discussion there seems to echo Cook's accounting in his edition of the *Crist*.

† With the following modifications: line 109: Cook reads *gæaro* (adv. = 'truly, verily'), but notes that "[t]he context seems rather to require *gæara* [adv. = 'of yore']", with which I concur and have so rendered in the equivalent form *gæaro* (Hall, p. 149, entry *gæara*); line 113: Cook reads *bided* (from

biddan) = 'beseeches, implore, entreats', while I (and others, e.g. Thorpe, *Codex Exoniensis*, 1842) prefer *bides* (from *bīdan*) = 'bides'. It is also interesting to note that *byldo* (line 113) has been changed on the MS from the equally-likely *hyldo* = 'favour, grace, kindness, protection: allegiance loyalty, reverence' (Hall, p. 201).

II. The *Blickling Homilies*:

The important passage is here given from Morris' edition of 1880 (p. 163, lines 19-23 and 30-35), together with Morris' translation (p. 162):

- 19 þa was acynned se mon Sancte Iohannes, se
was mara & selra eallum oþrum mannum. He was gelic
Godes englum, & he was bēme, Cristes fricca on þysne mid-
dangearð, & he was Godes Suna spellboda, & segnbora þæs ufan-
cundan Kynninges, & firena forgiðnes, & gerihntes hæpenra þeoda.
- 23
:
:
30 ... onð nu seo Cristes gebyrd æt his
ariste, se niwa eorendel Sanctus Iohannes; & nu nu se leoma
þære soþan sunnan God selfa cuman wille. Sylle se friccea his
stefne; & forþon þe nu þæt is se dema Drihten Crist, seo bēme
Sanctus Iohannes, & nu mid God selfa on þysne middangearð
35 cuman wile,—gange se engel beforan him Sanctus Iohannis; ...

Then was born the man Saint John, who was greater and more excellent than all other men; and he was like the angels of God; and he was the trumpet, Christ's crier in this world, and the messenger of God's Son, the standard-bearer of the Supreme King, and the forgiveness of sins and the setting right of heathen nations.

... and now the birth of Christ [was] at his appearing, and the new day-spring (or dawn) was John the Baptist. And now the gleam of the true Sun, God himself, shall come; let the crier give out his voice. And because that the Lord Christ is now the Judge, Saint John will be the trumpet, and will therefore come with God himself upon this earth; — let the messenger i.e. Saint John go before him.

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- (BoLT II) *The Book of Lost Tales, Part II*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.
- (LoB) *The Lays of Beleriand*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
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